

February 19, 1959

Dean Lyle H. Lanier  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, Illinois

Dear Lyle,

I wish to thank you very much for your letter of February 13, 1959, and to explain to you why I have decided to accept the position offered to me by M. I. T.

As you know, my main interest is in participating in the building of an outstanding training and research center in biology. I am certain that this can be accomplished in both places and I also realize that such an accomplishment at Illinois would be a more valuable public service. The reasons for my choosing M. I. T. are purely personal; the opportunity for me to develop a biology training program of an unusual kind, and the opportunity for Zella to pursue a career of her own in a completely separate institution. While she has always felt welcome in the Psychology Department at Illinois, it would always be difficult for her to be sure that she is really needed.

I wish to assure you, Provost Ray, and Dean Wall that I shall be leaving Illinois with a very troubled feeling and with nothing but good will and gratitude for the wonderful way I have been treated by the Administration, my colleagues, and especially by the Department of Bacteriology. In a sense, Urbana will always be home for us. If there is anything I can do to help the University or the Department, you can always count on me.

As for the plans you are developing for Biology, I think they will, as a whole, help build a good group. I have some qualms as to the desirability of vesting too much power in the Executive Committee of the proposed School of Life Sciences, lest the strongest departments, like Bacteriology and Entomology, be subjected to excessive control from without. I still feel that a Center of Basic Biology, outside the departments, would be a useful instrument for growth.

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In my opinion, the keys to success will always be: the procurement of top people for the faculty; the careful handling of each appointment in terms of the long-term program; and the encouragement of new approaches to biological research and teaching, unhampered by too many traditional assumptions as to the functions of biology departments.

Please extend my thanks and regards to Provost Ray and Fred Wall. Zella and I were upset at the news of your mother's illness. We hope her disease may have the slow course often observed in patients of advanced age.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

S. E. Luria

sel/jr